Most of al-Zumar is believed to have been revealed in the middle of the Makkah period, directly after Sūrah 34, Saba’ (JJ). Many commentators maintain that vv. 53–55 are from the Madinan period (Aj, Āl, IJ), as they are said to have been revealed regarding Waḥshī, an Abyssinian slave who gained his freedom by killing the Prophet’s cousin Ḥamzah at the Battle of Uhud in 3/625. Some say that only v. 53 pertains to this incident (IJ, Q, Ṭs), while others say that vv. 53–59 were all revealed in regard to it (Āl, Q). Others suggest that vv. 10 and 23 were also revealed during the Madinan period (Āl, IJ). The sūrah takes its title from the mention of the disbelievers being driven to Hell in throngs in v. 71 and the believers being driven to the Garden in throngs in v. 73. It is also known as al-Ghuraf, or “The Abodes,” after the mention in v. 20 of the lofty abodes that await the reverent in Paradise (Āl, Bq, Q, Ṭs). The opening verse of the sūrah can be read as a continuation of the last two verses of the previous sūrah (Aj, Āl).

From one perspective, the central theme of al-Zumar is devout or pure religious practice, as it emphasizes devoting religion entirely to God (vv. 2, 11, 14) more than any other sūrah and maintains that the pure religion belongs only to God and is devoid of worship of anything other than Him (v. 3). To highlight the importance of the pure religion, the sūrah juxtaposes the believers and the disbelievers throughout. After an opening injunction to be sincere in worship (vv. 1–4), the sūrah turns to the contrast between the two groups, comparing their
attitudes toward the signs of God and punctuating the discussion with rhetorical questions such as, Are those who know and those who do not know equal? (v. 9), and statements such as, Whomsoever God leads astray, no guide has he. And whomsoever God guides, none shall lead him astray (vv. 36–37).

A passage on death emphasizes the desperate circumstances of those who disbelieve when they meet their final end (vv. 42–52). But v. 53, which many have referred to as the most hopeful verse of the Quran, underlines the enduring availability of God’s Mercy and Forgiveness even to those who have been prodigal to the detriment of their own souls. This is followed by an exhortation to turn to God in repentance (vv. 54–67), which leads into the extended contrast between the disparate ends of the two groups in the Hereafter (vv. 68–75) with which the sūrah ends.

According to a report from the Prophet’s wife Ḥabisah, the Prophet would not sleep until he had recited al-Zumar and Banū Isrāʾīl, the latter being another name for Sūrah 17, al-Isrāʾ, “The Night Journey” (IK, Q).

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

1. The revelation of the Book from God, the Mighty, the Wise. 2. Indeed, We have sent down unto thee the Book in truth; so worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him. 3. Behold! Unto God belongs the pure religion, and those who take protectors apart from Him [say], “We do not worship them, save to bring us nigh in nearness unto God.” Truly God will judge between them regarding that wherein they differ. Truly God does not guide one who is a disbelieving liar. 4. Had God wanted to take a child, He would have chosen whatsoever He willed from that which He created. Glory be to Him; He is the One, the Paramount 5. He created the heavens and the earth in truth. He rolls
the night up into the day and rolls the day up into the night, and He made the sun and the moon subservient, each running for a term appointed. Is He not the Mighty, the Forgiving? He created you from a single soul, then made from it its mate, and sent down for you of cattle eight pairs. He creates you in your mothers’ wombs, creation after creation, in threefold darkness. That is God, your Lord; to Him belongs sovereignty. There is no god but He. How, then, are you turned away? If you do not believe, surely God is beyond need of you. He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants. And if you are grateful, He is pleased therewith for you; and none shall bear the burden of another. Then unto your Lord is your return, and He shall inform you of that which you used to do. Truly He knows what lies within breasts. And when harm befalls man, he calls upon his Lord, turning unto Him. Then when He bestows a blessing from Himself upon him, he forgets the One upon whom he called before and sets up equals unto God to lead astray from His path. Say, “Enjoy your disbelief a little; truly you shall be among the inhabitants of the Fire.” What of one who is devoutly obedient during the watches of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], wary of the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord [. . .]? Say, “Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Only possessors of intellect reflect.” Say, “O My servants who believe, reverence your Lord. For those who do good in this world there is good; and God’s earth is vast.” Surely those who are patient shall be paid their reward in full without reckoning.
11 Say, “Truly I have been commanded to worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him. 12 And I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit.” 13 Say, “ Truly I fear, should I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous day.” 14 Say, “ God do I worship, devoting my religion entirely to Him. 15 So worship whatsoever you will apart from Him.” Say, “Truly the losers are those who lose their souls and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Yea! That is the manifest loss.” 16 Above them they shall have canopies of fire and below them canopies; with that does God strike fear into His servants. O My servants! Reverence Me! 17 And as for those who shun false deities and worshipping them, and turn unto God, unto them glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants, 18 who listen to the Word, then follow what is most beautiful of it. It is they whom God has guided; it is they who are the possessors of intellect. 19 What of one for whom the Word of punishment comes due? Wilt thou save one who is in the Fire? 20 But as for those who reverence their Lord, they will have lofty abodes above which are lofty abodes, and rivers running below. That is God’s Promise; God will not fail the tryst. 21 Hast thou not considered that God sends down water from the sky, conducts it as springs in the earth, then brings forth crops of diverse colors? Then they wither and thou seest them yellowing. Then He turns them to chaff. Truly in that is a reminder for possessors of intellect. 22 What of one whose breast God has expanded for submission, such that he follows a light from his Lord? Woe unto those whose
hearts are hardened to the remembrance of God! They are in manifest error. God has sent down the most beautiful discourse, a Book consimilar, paired, whereat quivers the skin of those who fear their Lord. Then their skin and their hearts soften unto the remembrance of God. That is God’s Guidance, wherewith He guides whomsoever He will; and whomsoever God leads astray, no guide has he. What of one who guards with his face against the evil punishment on the Day of Resurrection? And it shall be said unto the wrongdoers, “Taste that which you used to earn.” Those before them denied, and the punishment came upon them whence they were not aware. Thus God had them taste disgrace in the life of this world; yet the punishment of the Hereafter is surely greater, if they but knew. And indeed We have set forth for mankind in this Quran every kind of parable, that haply they may remember, an Arabic Quran, bearing no crookedness, that haply they may be reverent. God sets forth a parable: a man in whom quarreling partners share, and a man belonging to one man: are the two equal in likeness? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them know not. Surely thou wilt die, and surely they will die. Then on the Day of Resurrection, before thy Lord will you dispute. So who does greater wrong than one who lies against God and denies the truth when it comes to him? Is there not within Hell an abode for the disbelievers? And whosoever comes with the truth and confirms it, it is they who are reverent. With their Lord they shall have whatsoever they will—that is the recompense of the virtuous— that God may absolve
them of the worst of that which they have done and render unto them their reward for the best of that which they used to do. Does God not suffice His servant? Yet they would frighten thee with those apart from Him; and whomsoever God leads astray, no guide has he. And whomsoever God guides, none shall lead him astray. Is not God Mighty, Possessor of Vengeance? And wert thou to ask them, “Who created the heavens and the earth?” They would surely say, “God.” Say, “Then have you considered those upon whom you call, apart from God? If God desires some harm for me, could they remove His Harm, or if He desires some mercy, could they withhold His Mercy?” Say, “God suffices me; in Him trust those who trust.” Say, “O my people! Act according to your position; I, too, am acting. Soon you shall know upon whom there comes a punishment that disgraces him and upon whom there falls a punishment enduring.” Truly We have sent down unto thee the Book for mankind in truth. Whosoever is rightly guided, it is for the sake of his own soul. And whosoever goes astray only goes astray to the detriment thereof. And thou art not a guardian over them. God takes souls at the moment of their death, and those who die not, during their sleep. He withholds those for whom He has decreed death, and sends forth the others till a term appointed. Truly in that are signs for a people who reflect. Or do they take intercessors apart from God? Say, “Even though they have not any power and do not understand?” Say, “Unto God belongs intercession altogether. To Him belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. Then unto Him
shall you be returned.” And when God is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter recoil. But when those apart from Him are mentioned, behold, they rejoice. Say, “O God! Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the Unseen and the seen, Thou judgest between Thy servants regarding that wherein they differ.” Were those who work evil to possess all that is on the earth and the like of it besides, they would seek to ransom themselves with it from the terrible punishment on the Day of Resurrection. And there will appear unto them from God that which they had not reckoned. The evils of that which they have earned will appear unto them, and that which they used to mock will beset them. And when harm befalls man, he calls upon Us. Then, when We confer upon him a blessing from Us, he says, “I was only given it because of knowledge.” Nay, it is a trial, but most of them know not. Those before them did say the same; yet that which they used to earn availed them not. So the evils of that which they earned befell them. And as for those who do wrong among these, the evils of that which they have earned will befall them, and they cannot thwart it. Do they not know that God outspreads and straitens provision for whomsoever He will? Truly in that are signs for a people who believe. Say, “O My servants who have been prodigal to the detriment of their own souls! Despair not of God’s Mercy. Truly God forgives all sins. Truly He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Turn unto your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you, whereupon you will not be
And follow the most beautiful of that which has been sent down unto you from your Lord, before the punishment comes suddenly upon you while you are unaware,” lest any soul should say, “Alas for me, for what I neglected of my duty to God! Indeed, I was among the scoffers.” Or lest it say, “If only God had guided me, I would have been among the reverent.” Or lest it say, when it sees the punishment, “If only I had another chance, I would be among the virtuous.” Nay, My signs did indeed come unto you; yet you denied them, waxed arrogant, and were among the disbelievers. And on the Day of Resurrection thou wilt see those who lied against God having blackened faces. Is there not in Hell an abode for the arrogant? And God saves those who are reverent by their triumph; evil will not befall them; nor will they grieve. God is the Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over all things. Unto Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who disbelieve in the signs of God, it is they who are the losers. Say, “Do you bid me to worship other than God, O ignorant ones?” Surely it has been revealed unto thee and unto those before thee that if thou dost ascribe partners [unto God], thy work will surely come to naught and thou shalt be among the losers. Rather, worship God and be among the thankful! They did not measure God with His true measure. The whole earth shall be but a handful to Him on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be enfolded in His right Hand. Glory be to Him, exalted is He above the partners they ascribe. And the trumpet will be blown, whereupon
whosoever is in the heavens and on the earth will swoon, save those whom God wills. Then it will be blown again, and, behold, they will be standing, beholding. The earth will shine with the Light of its Lord, the Book will be set down, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forth. Judgment will be made between them in truth, and they shall not be wronged. Every soul will be paid in full for that which it has done, and He knows best what they do. And those who disbelieve will be driven unto Hell in throngs, till when they reach it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say unto them, “Did not messengers from among you come to you, reciting unto you the signs of your Lord and warning you of the meeting with this your Day?” They will say, “Yea, indeed!” But the Word of punishment has come due for the disbelievers. It will be said, “Enter the gates of Hell, to abide therein.” How evil is the abode of the arrogant! And those who reverence their Lord will be driven to the Garden in throngs, till when they reach it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say unto them, “Peace be upon you; you have done well; so enter it, to abide therein.” They will say, “Praise be to God, Who was faithful to us in His Promise, and has caused us to inherit the land, that we may settle in the Garden wheresoever we will.” How excellent is the reward of the workers! And thou shalt see the angels encircling all around the Throne, hymning the praise of their Lord. Judgment shall be made between them in truth, and it will be said, “Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.”
Commentary

1 The revelation of the Book from God, the Mighty, the Wise.

   Cf. 40:2; 45:2; 46:2. As this verse has no verb, it could alternately be rendered with an implied demonstrative at the beginning: “This is the revelation of the Book from God” (IJ, R, Z). In discussions of the levels of Quranic recitation Sufis say that one should first hear the Quran as if it were being recited by the Prophet, then as if it were being recited by the Archangel Gabriel, and then as if it were being recited by God Himself. They sometimes cite this verse and 40:2, which differs only in that the last word is the Knower, in support of this third and last level.

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2 Indeed, We have sent down unto thee the Book in truth; so worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him.

   Here God’s revelation of the Quran in truth or with truth (cf. 2:176, 213; 3:3; 4:105; 5:48; 6:114; 39:41; 42:17) is followed by an injunction to worship God; in 4:105, it is sent down . . . in truth, that thou mightest judge between men according to what God has shown thee. In both verses, the Book refers to the Quran, but in 2:213, the same phrase refers to the revelations sent to all prophets: And with them He sent down the Book in truth, to judge among mankind concerning that wherein they differed; also see 5:48c. Devoting religion entirely to Him (cf. 7:29; 10:22; 29:65; 31:32; 39:11; 40:14, 65; 98:5) indicates sincerity, purification, and complete devotion; see 7:29c; 31:32c; 98:5c.

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3 Behold! Unto God belongs the pure religion, and those who take protectors apart from Him [say], “We do not worship them, save to bring us nigh in nearness unto God.” Truly God will judge between them regarding that wherein they differ. Truly God does not guide one who is a
disbelieving liar.

3 Pure translates khāliṣ, from the same root, kh-l-ṣ, as the word rendered devoting (mukhliṣ) in v. 2, and carries the same connotations of sincerity and devotion. Together the attributes of devotion and purity could be understood to mean that God requires that religion be devoted entirely to Him, so that obedience to Him is total and purified of any defects (Z), or to mean that ikhlāṣ (sincerity and purity of devotion) is the “leader of all devotional acts” (R). In contrast, the idolaters who, although they recognize that there is some power greater than themselves, nonetheless fall short of pure devotion, or ikhlāṣ, by worshipping many deities. Then they try to have it both ways, saying, We do not worship them, save to bring us nigh in nearness unto God. But since this is not the pure religion, God will not guide them and they will be forsaken by their deities, as in 46:28: Why, then, did they—whom they had taken as gods apart from God and as a means of drawing nigh [unto God]—not help them? Nay, they forsook them (cf. 34:40–41). For God’s judging between them regarding that wherein they differ, see 2:113c; 10:93; 16:124; 32:25; 45:17.

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4 Had God wanted to take a child, He would have chosen whatsoever He willed from that which He created. Glory be to Him; He is the One, the Paramount.

4 This verse is read by some as a rejection of the idolaters’ attribution of offspring to God as well as the assertion by Christians that Jesus is the son of God and the claim attributed by Muslims to some Jews (see 9:30) that Ezra is the son of God (IK). But given the criticism of the Makkan idolaters in the previous verse and the widespread view that this sūrah is from the Makkan period, the rejection, as al-Zamakhsharī maintains, is most likely directed toward the idolaters’ attribution of sons and daughters to God, a notion criticized in many verses (see, e.g., 2:116; 6:100; 9:30; 10:68; 17:40, 111; 18:4; 19:35, 88–93; 21:26; 25:2; 37:149, 153; 43:16, 81–82; 52:39; 72:3). Regarding the Divine Name the Paramount (al-Qahhār), see 38:65–66c.

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5 He created the heavens and the earth in truth. He rolls
the night up into the day and rolls the day up into the night, and He made the sun and the moon subservient, each running for a term appointed. Is He not the Mighty, the Forgiving?

5 That God created the heavens and the earth in truth (cf. 6:73; 16:3; 29:44; 45:22; 64:3) is reiterated in various ways in several verses (see 10:5; 14:19; 15:85; 30:8; 44:39; 46:3); see 29:44c; 44:38–39c. In this context, creation is related to God’s sending revelation in truth (v. 2), alluding to the subtle way in which revelation and creation are bound together by the same underlying reality; creation itself is in a sense God’s first revelation. God’s rolling the day into the night and the night into the day is elsewhere expressed as His making the night pass into the day and . . . the day pass into the night (22:61; 31:29; 35:13; 57:6; cf. 3:27); see 31:29c. That the sun and the moon are made subservient (cf. 7:54; 13:2; 29:61; 31:29; 35:13) indicates the manner in which the truth in and through which they are created continues to determine their reality and evokes the dominion and responsibility that God has given human beings in making them His vicegerents (see 6:165c; 10:14; 35:39), which is made more explicit in 14:33: And He has made the sun and the moon subservient unto you, constant, and He made the night and the day subservient unto you (cf. 16:12; 22:36–37, 65; 31:20; 45:12–13).

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6 He created you from a single soul, then made from it its mate, and sent down for you of cattle eight pairs. He creates you in your mothers’ wombs, creation after creation, in threefold darkness. That is God, your Lord; to Him belongs sovereignty. There is no god but He. How, then, are you turned away?

6 That God created human beings from a single soul (see 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 31:28) points to the origin of all human beings in Adam (IK); see 4:1c. Elsewhere, God’s having created for human beings mates from themselves (or “from their souls”) is a gift for which humanity should feel awe and gratitude; see 16:72; 30:21; 35:11; 42:11; 78:8. That God sends down cattle refers to His having provided all manner of grazing livestock for human use, some for burden and some
for slaughter (6:142). The eight pairs refers to the male and female of sheep, goats, camel, and oxen; see 6:142c. Creation after creation most likely alludes to the three stages of gestation mentioned in 23:13–14: Then We made him a drop in a secure dwelling place. Then of the drop We created a blood clot, then of the blood clot We created a lump of flesh (cf. 22:5). Threefold darkness is then seen as an allusion to the layers in which the fetus is wrapped: the placenta, the uterus, and the belly (IK, JJ). How, then, are you turned away? (cf. 10:32) is an expression of amazement asking how one could possibly turn away from the worship of the One who is responsible for all the realities mentioned in vv. 5–6, preferring to worship the sons and daughters falsely ascribed to Him who it is claimed will bring one nigh in nearness unto God (v. 3).

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7 If you do not believe, surely God is beyond need of you. He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants. And if you are grateful, He is pleased therewith for you; and none shall bear the burden of another. Then unto your Lord is your return, and He shall inform you of that which you used to do. Truly He knows what lies within breasts.

7 That God is beyond need of you (cf. 3:97; 29:6) is related to the idea that unto God belongs the pure religion (v. 3), for neither God nor His religion are in need of human beings, but human beings are in need of both. That God is not pleased with disbelief or ingratitude for His servants may imply God’s Mercy toward the believers and guidance of them by preventing them from falling into a state that would lead to their ruin, which can be seen as following upon His declaration to Satan, As for My servants, truly thou hast no authority over them (15:42; 17:65; Ṭ, Z). Others say that this verse applies to all human beings (Ṭ). In this sense the verse clarifies that it is not because God has any need of people’s belief in Him that He punishes them, but because it displeases Him (Ṭ). God is then pleased with gratitude, not for His own sake, but because it leads to His servants’ salvation (Z). All of this together indicates that God Himself derives no benefit from human beings’ faith in Him (Z), but rewards them for it out of His Mercy. In this vein, a ḥadīth qudsī reports that God says, “O My servants! If the first of you and the last of you, the jinn among you and the human beings among you, were to have hearts like the most profligate of hearts among you, it would not diminish aught from My Sovereignty” (IK). That none shall bear the burden of another (cf.
6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 53:38) is a testament to God’s Justice, meaning that no one will be forced to endure the punishments accrued through deeds committed by others; see 35:18c. This is one of several verses where it is said that at the Final Judgment, God will inform people about their actions in this life; see 5:14, 105; 6:60, 108, 159; 9:94, 105; 10:23; 24:64; 29:8; 31:15, 23; 41:50; 58:6–7; 62:8; 64:7; 75:13. That God knows what lies within breasts (3:119; 5:7; 8:43; 11:5; 31:23; 35:38; 42:24; 57:6; 64:4; 67:13) means that He knows what is within the hearts of all human beings (JJ) and implies that He will inform them not only of their deeds, but also of the intentions behind their deeds.

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8 And when harm befalls man, he calls upon his Lord, turning unto Him. Then when He bestows a blessing from Himself upon him, he forgets the One upon whom he called before and sets up equals unto God to lead astray from His path. Say, “Enjoy your disbelief a little; truly you shall be among the inhabitants of the Fire.”

This is one of several verses to mention people’s tendency to call upon the Lord in times of peril or adversity (Ṭ) or times of need (IK; see also 6:40–41c; 10:12; 17:67; 30:33). Then when He bestows a blessing upon them or when He lets them taste of His Mercy (30:33) by relieving them of such afflictions, they revert to heedlessness and the pursuit of their caprices (Ṭ, Ṭb); see also 7:189–90c; 10:12c. Disbelief translates kufr, whose root meaning is “covering over” and here invokes a sense of ingratitude, as one is “covering over” the blessings one has received. The phrase could thus be rendered, “Revel in your ingratitude” a little, that is, for the duration of your life (JJ), which is little compared to the duration of the Hereafter. A little could also be understood as a reference to the delights of this world being “little” (Q) in comparison to the delights one would experience in the Hereafter.

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9 What of one who is devoutly obedient during the watches of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], wary of the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord
Say, “Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Only possessors of intellect reflect.”

9 The final phrase of the rhetorical question is elided, implying “Is he like those mentioned in the previous verse?” (IJ). The need for an elided phrase can be removed by reading what of one who (am man) as “O one who” (a man; IJ, Q, R, Ṭ). In this latter reading, “O one who is devoutly obedient,” the verse would refer to those in a state of spiritual obedience, constancy, and serenity (cf. 2:116, 238; 3:17, 43; 4:34; 16:120; 30:26; 33:31, 35; 66:12). Regarding the state of being wary of the punishment that may befall one in the Hereafter and of hoping for mercy or forgiveness from God, the Prophet is reported to have asked a man who was on his deathbed, “How do you feel?” When the man responded, “I am fearful and hopeful,” the Prophet said, “These two are not joined together in a man’s heart at a moment like this, but that God grants him that for which he hopes and protects him from that which he fears” (IK).

The difference between believers and disbelievers is also likened to the difference between the blind and the seeing (6:50; 11:24; 13:16; 35:19; 40:58), the deaf and the hearing (11:24), and light and darkness (13:16). Such comparisons can also be used to differentiate between types of believers, as in a hadith: “The virtue of the pious scholar over the devoted worshipper is as the virtue of the full moon over all the other heavenly bodies.” Possessors of intellect (2:179, 197, 269; 3:7, 190; 5:100c; 12:111; 13:19; 14:52; 38:29, 43; 39:18, 21; 40:54; 65:10) are those who possess true knowledge of the inner reality of things. Intellect renders lubb (pl. albāb), which literally means “kernel,” “pith,” or “core”; as an allusion to knowledge and insight, intellect represents the “pith” or “core” of the human being. In commenting upon this verse, Ibn ʿArabī gives the word another interpretation, seeing it as a reference to the “kernel” or “pith” of knowledge, which is sent down from God, while reason is its “shell,” which must be used to reach the “pith” if reason is to be employed effectively. Possessors of intellect are thus those who employ reason as it should be employed, knowing that the “kernel” or “pith” is their true sustenance, not reason in and of itself independent of revelation (Futūḥāt III 120.32–35).

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10 Say, “O My servants who believe, reverence your Lord. For those who do good in this world there is good; and God’s earth is vast.” Surely those who are patient shall be
paid their reward in full without reckoning.

10 Those who are devoutly obedient and perform righteous deeds in this life will receive the gift of Paradise (JJ) or good in this life (such as health and peace) and in the next (Ţs). God's earth is vast implies that one should emigrate away from the company of idolaters (IK, JJ, Ţ) and is thus viewed as encouragement to the Muslims of the Prophet’s time to emigrate from Makkah. It can also be understood as a reference to the “land of God” in the Garden, which one should seek by performing righteous deeds (Ţs). In this context, those who are patient contrasts with those who waver in v. 8. Without reckoning refers to their not having to endure the weighing of their deeds in the balance on the Day of Judgment (Ţ, Z).

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11 Say, “Truly I have been commanded to worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him.

11 Devoting religion entirely to Him (cf. 7:29; 10:22; 29:65; 31:32; 39:2; 40:14, 65; 98:5) indicates sincerity, purification, and complete devotion; see 7:29c; 31:32c; 98:5c.

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12 And I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit.”

12 That the Prophet was commanded to be the first of those who submit (cf. 6:14, 163) refers specifically to his community or his generation (IJ). Earlier prophets and their followers are also designated as submitters (muslims) in several verses; see the essay “The Quranic View of Sacred History and Other Religions.” Similarly, Moses declares, I am the first of the believers (7:143; cf. 26:51), not because he is the first to have ever believed, but because he is the first among his community to have believed in the revelation that has been sent to him. In such contexts, the first can also be understood to mean “the foremost”; see 3:96c; 6:14c.

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Say, “Truly I fear, should I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous day.”

This verse is repeated verbatim in 6:15 and 10:15; see 6:15c.

Say, “God do I worship, devoting my religion entirely to Him.

See 39:2c.

So worship whatsoever you will apart from Him.” Say, “Truly the losers are those who lose their souls and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Yea! That is the manifest loss.”

The first sentence of this verse is both a threat to the disbelievers and a means of repudiating them (IK), as in 6:19, where the Prophet is told to say, He is only one God, and truly I am quit of that which you ascribe as partners unto Him (cf. 6:78; 10:41). In this sense, this verse is similar to the declaration of a complete separation between Islam and the religion of the idolaters found in Sūrah 109, which concludes unto you your religion and unto me my religion (109:6). The losers, who have lost this world and the Hereafter (22:11), have lost themselves insofar as they have wasted the opportunity to perform righteous deeds and repent in this world, and they have lost their families insofar as they will have no family in the Hereafter (Ṭ). They are thus left with no one to whom they can turn and in whom they might find comfort, or even with whom they can commiserate. In contrast, when the righteous approach Paradise, they shall enter along with those who were righteous from among their fathers, their spouses, and their progeny (13:23; cf. 40:8; 43:70).

Above them they shall have canopies of fire and below
them canopies; with that does God strike fear into His servants. O My servants! Reverence Me!

16 Canopies here refers to layers of fire (JJ); cf. 29:55. With this threat does God strike fear into His believing servants, as indicated by the final address (JJ). Others take servants here as a reference to all human beings (Ṭ).

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17 And as for those who shun false deities and worshipping them, and turn unto God, unto them glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants,

17 False deities translates al-tāghūt, which denotes a variety of false sources of authority, false objects of worship, and false causes (cf. 2:256–57; 4:51–52, 60, 76; 5:60; 16:36). To shun them thus implies shunning the worship of all that is other than God (Ṭ). Some take al-tāghūt to be singular and thus understand it to mean Satan (Ṭ); see also 4:51–52c.

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18 who listen to the Word, then follow what is most beautiful of it. It is they whom God has guided; it is they who are the possessors of intellect.

18 Those who listen to the Word, then follow are those who understand it and act in accord with it (IK), similar to what is said to Moses regarding the commandments of the Torah in 7:145: Take hold of them with strength, and command thy people to hold to the best of them (IK). They are possessors of intellect because they follow and act in accord with revelation; see 39:9c; 5:100c. Following what is most beautiful of the revelation can also be understood to mean that one distinguishes between what is good and what is best, what is virtuous and what is most virtuous, and chooses the best or most virtuous course of action, desiring what is closer to God and what merits greater reward (Z).

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What of one for whom the Word of punishment comes due? Wilt thou save one who is in the Fire?

The opening rhetorical question of this verse is answered by an elided or implied phrase something to the effect of “Is he to be delivered from the Fire.” The question, posed to the Prophet, Wilt thou save one who is in the Fire? means that the function of the Prophet is simply to deliver the message and then help guide those whom God has chosen, since God leads astray whomsoever He will and guides whomsoever He will (14:4; 16:93; 35:8). This verse resembles other verses that emphasize that human beings find guidance when God has chosen to guide them, as in 16:9: And it is for God to show the way, for some of them lead astray. Had He willed, He would have guided you all together (cf. 13:31). According to another reading, this verse can also be read, “As for one for whom the Word of punishment comes due, wilt thou save one who is in the fire?” (R, Z).

But as for those who reverence their Lord, they will have lofty abodes above which are lofty abodes, and rivers running below. That is God’s Promise; God will not fail the tryst.

The lofty abodes of Paradise are described in several sayings of the Prophet: “In the Garden there are abodes whose inside can be seen from the outside and whose outside from the inside.” When asked whom these rooms were for, he replied, “For those who speak kindly, feed the hungry, and stand in prayer at night while people are sleeping” (IK). In ḥadīth that appears to allude to these lofty abodes, he said, “The people of the Garden will look upon one another in the abodes, just as you look upon the stars of the east and the stars of the west rising on the horizon according to their excellence in rank.” When asked, “Are they the prophets?” he replied, “Yea! By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, and the people who believed in God and His Messenger and who affirmed the messengers” (IK). God will not fail the tryst (cf. 3:9, 195; 13:31) means that the Day of Reckoning is guaranteed and, in this context, that God will grant them what He has promised.

Hast thou not considered that God sends down water
from the sky, conducts it as springs in the earth, then brings forth crops of diverse colors? Then they wither and thou seest them yellowing. Then He turns them to chaff. Truly in that is a reminder for possessors of intellect.

21 Regarding God’s sending down water from the sky, see 6:99c. Here the various stages of plant life are posed as a metaphor for the stages of human life, as in 18:45: Set forth for them a parable of the life of this world: [It is] like water We send down from the sky. Then it mixes with the vegetation of the earth. Then it becomes chaff, scattered by the winds (cf. 57:20). Both verses indicate God’s Power over all things and that all things perish, save His Face (28:88).

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22 What of one whose breast God has expanded for submission, such that he follows a light from his Lord? Woe unto those whose hearts are hardened to the remembrance of God! They are in manifest error.

22 This first phrase is followed by an elided phrase that is understood to be something to the effect of “[is he] like he who is not” or “[is he] like one whose heart He has sealed” (JJ). The breast is understood to be the locus of the heart and the fountainhead of the spirit (Bḍ) and is thus identified with the seat of inspirations, thoughts, and intentions. The Quran mentions frequently that God knows what lies within breasts (e.g., 3:119, 154; 5:7c; 8:43; 11:5) and in 100:10 alludes to the Day of Judgment as a day on which what lies within breasts is made known. While the breast’s expansion is associated with belief (see 94:1c), its contraction is associated with disbelief (see 6:125c). When one follows a light from his Lord it means that God has opened one’s heart to spiritual knowledge (maʻrifah) and guidance (Bḍ). The manner in which light expands the breast is described by the Prophet: “When light enters the heart, it expands and it becomes spacious.” When asked what the mark of that was, he responded, “Constant turning to the Abode of Eternity, shunning the abode of delusion, and preparing for death before it arrives” (Bḍ, N, Q). By contrast, those whose hearts are hardened to the remembrance of God stew in the dark recesses of desire and seek the things of this world, far from the lights of knowledge and guidance; see 8:29c. People’s hearts may be described as “hardened,” “sealed,” or “covered” as a result of their own
wrongdoing and the consequent loss of Divine Favor, so that they are no longer receptive to Divine messages or to the remembrance of God; cf. 2:7, 74; 5:13; 6:25, 43; 7:101; 9:87, 93; 10:74; 16:108; 17:46; 18:57; 30:59; 47:16; 57:16; 63:3. Also see 10:88, where Moses asks God to harden the hearts of Pharaoh and his people.

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23 God has sent down the most beautiful discourse, a Book consimilar, paired, whereat quivers the skin of those who fear their Lord. Then their skin and their hearts soften unto the remembrance of God. That is God’s Guidance, wherewith He guides whomsoever He will; and whomsoever God leads astray, no guide has he.

23 The most beautiful discourse refers to the Quran (Bḍ, IK, Q), which is considered most beautiful in both meaning and expression, its verses being consimilar and paired, signifying aspects of this beauty (R). That it is consimilar can be understood to mean that each part is as eloquent as the next (R); to allude to the manner in which many parts resemble others, with various recurring phrases (IK, T); to refer to the manner in which particular qualities such as beauty and wisdom (Q) or truth and inimitability (Bḍ) are found throughout; or to mean that each part confirms the other parts (Q). Consimilar renders mutashābih, a word that is also used to describe some verses of the Quran in 3:7, but with a very different, more technical meaning of the word (IK); see 3:7c. Paired refers to the way that many opposites are juxtaposed in the Quran, such as Heaven and Hell, believers and disbelievers, the pious and the profligate, and reward and punishment (IK). An example of such juxtaposition is then provided through reference to the skin that quivers out of fear of God’s Might and Punishment and the skins and hearts that soften out of hope for His Mercy and Forgiveness.

That the Quran makes skins quiver and then soften along with hearts is another attribute that makes it most beautiful (Aj). While other verses mention those whose hearts respond to the recitation of the Quran (see 8:2; 5:83), or when God is mentioned (22:35), this is the only verse to mention those whose skins quiver and soften unto the remembrance of God. According to some commentators, this is a description of the Companions of the Prophet, whose eyes would water and skins would quiver when the Quran was recited (Q). In this interpretation, remembrance is often understood to mean “Reminder,” as a reference to the Quran, one of whose
names is “the Reminder” (al-Dhikr). But as translated here, it is understood as a reference to the remembrance of God referred to in such verses as 13:28: Those who believe and whose hearts are at peace in the remembrance of God. Are not hearts at peace in the remembrance of God? It could also be understood to mean that when God remembers a person, that person’s heart cannot but soften; see commentary on 29:45: But the remembrance of God is surely greater.

That is God’s Guidance refers to the Quran as described in this verse (Q) or to what God has granted by way of fear of His Punishment and hope for His Reward (Q). As for those whom God leads astray, the Quran says that there is no way (4:88, 143; 42:46), no guide (7:186; 13:33; 39:36; 40:33), and no protector (18:17; 42:44). In this context no guide has he can be understood to mean that for one whose skin does not quiver and then soften along with the heart, there is no guidance.

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24 What of one who guards with his face against the evil punishment on the Day of Resurrection? And it shall be said unto the wrongdoers, “Taste that which you used to earn.”

24 There is an elided phrase here something to the effect of “Is he as one who does right.” In this sense this verse is similar in meaning to 41:40: Is one who is cast in the Fire better, or one who comes in security on the Day of Resurrection? (IK, T) and 67:22: Is one who walks with his face stooped down more guided, or one who walks upright upon a straight path? (IK). Guards with his face indicates either that the first thing to touch the Fire is his face or that he is dragged upon his face into the Fire (Q, T). Taste that which you used to earn evokes a similar statement in 7:39: So taste of the punishment for that which you have earned.

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25 Those before them denied, and the punishment came upon them whence they were not aware.

25 The punishment came upon them whence they were not aware (cf. 16:26, 45) refers to the punishments that came upon peoples of the past, such as the flood upon the people of Noah, the plagues upon the Egyptians, and the storms upon the
people of Lot as well as the destruction of the Arabian tribes of Ād and Thamūd, among others.

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26 Thus God had them taste disgrace in the life of this world; yet the punishment of the Hereafter is surely greater, if they but knew.

26 This verse is a warning to the disbelievers that, as bad as any disgrace they can imagine in this life may be, that of the Hereafter will be infinitely greater.

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27 And indeed We have set forth for mankind in this Quran every kind of parable, that haply they may remember,

27 Every kind of parable can also be understood to mean “every parable,” in which case it is read either as a reference to the accounts of the people alluded to in vv. 25–26 (Ṭ) or to mean all the parables that people would need for understanding religious matters (Bd, Q); see 30:58–59c. That haply they may remember can also be understood to mean “that they may take heed” (Bd). While the parables of the Quran are sent down for all of humanity, none understand them, save those who know (29:43).

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28 an Arabic Quran, bearing no crookedness, that haply they may be reverent.

28 An Arabic Quran is literally “an Arabic recitation” (cf. 12:2; 20:113; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3) and is understood as an allusion to the supreme eloquence of the Quran, which cannot be matched, as in 17:88, where the Prophet is enjoined, Say, “Surely if mankind and jinn banded together to bring the like of this Quran, they would not bring the like thereof, even if they supported one another” (R). Bearing no crookedness (cf. 18:1) is understood to mean that there is no contradiction in the Quran (IK, JJ, R), as in 4:82:Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found much discrepancy therein. That a verse ending
with *that haply they may remember* is followed by this one ending with *that haply they may be reverent* can be understood to mean that remembrance, knowledge, and understanding precede and are thus necessary for true reverence (R).

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29 God sets forth a parable: a man in whom quarreling partners share, and a man belonging to one man: are the two equal in likeness? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them know not.

In this analogy, *a man in whom quarreling partners share* represents the idolater, who serves many masters, while *a man belonging to one man* represents the believer, who serves only God (IK, Q, R, T). The two parts of this analogy can also be understood as representing a heart that is divided among many interests and one that is devoted entirely to God (Aj). In this vein, the Prophet is reported to have said, “Whosoever makes his aspirations one aspiration—that is, God—God suffices him for aspiration in this world. Yet whosoever is dispersed by his aspirations, in whichever valley of the world he may be destroyed, God has no concern for him” (Aj). And in another *ḥadīth*, “One for whom the world is his aspiration, God divides his affairs for him, places his poverty (*faqr*) before his eyes, and nothing of the world comes to him but what has been apportioned for him. Yet one for whom the Hereafter is his aspiration, God gathers his affairs together for him, places his wealth (*ghināhu*) in his heart, and the world comes to him, though it be slight” (Aj). Read in this way, this verse echoes the underlying theme of this *sūrah*, devoting religion entirely to Him (vv. 2, 11, 14) and following the pure religion (v. 3), since only the heart that has God as its single aspiration can be completely devoted to Him.


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30 Surely thou wilt die, and surely they will die.
Then on the Day of Resurrection, before thy Lord will you dispute.

After v. 31 was revealed, the Prophet is reported to have been asked by his Companion al-Zubayr, “Shall the worst sins that passed between us in this world return to us?” The Prophet said, “Yes. They will indeed return to you until everyone who has a claim has presented that to which he has a claim.” Al-Zubayr replied, “By God, the affair is severe” (IK). This verse can thus be understood as a reference to those who have been wronged disputing with those who wronged them, the truthful disputing with liars, and other such pairings (IK, Ṭṣ). It is also reported that Ibn ʿAbbās said, “People will dispute on the Day of Resurrection to the point that the soul will dispute with the body. The soul will say to the body, ‘You did such and such.’ And the body will say to the soul, ‘You told me to do it and you tempted me.’ . . . Then an angel will say to them, ‘You have passed judgment against yourselves’” (IK). In this sense, v. 31 is similar to 41:19–21: And on that Day the enemies of God are gathered unto the Fire and are marshaled in [ordered ranks], till, when they come upon it, their ears, their eyes, and their skins will bear witness against them for that which they used to do. And they will say to their skins, “Why did you bear witness against us?”

Some also read the present verses as a reference to the disputes that arose among the Muslims soon after the death of the Prophet (IK, Ṭṣ). Some Shiites interpret them as a reference to those they believe usurped ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s rightful place as the commander of the faithful (amīr al-muʾminīn; Qm).

So who does greater wrong than one who lies against God and denies the truth when it comes to him? Is there not within Hell an abode for the disbelievers?

Lies against God can also mean “lies regarding God,” in reference to those who claim that God has partners or offspring (IK). It is similar to the frequently repeated question, Who does greater wrong than one who fabricates a lie against God? (6:21, 93, 144; 7:37; 10:17; 11:18; 18:15; 29:68; cf. 61:7). Similarly, 6:157 asks, Who does greater wrong than one who denies the signs of God and turns away from them? Regarding the rhetorical question, Is there not within Hell an abode for the disbelievers? see 39:60; 29:68c.
And whosoever comes with the truth and confirms it, it is they who are reverent.

This verse is best understood as a general statement referring to all who are called to believe in the Oneness of God, affirm the Prophet, and act in accord with the message with which he was sent, or to those who come with the Quran on the Day of Resurrection saying, “This is what you gave to us and we have followed what is in it” (Ṭ). Some, however, interpret *whosoever comes with the truth* as a reference to the Prophet (R, Ṭ, Ṭs, ī) or to the Archangel Gabriel (Ṭs, ī) and then read an additional but unstated phrase into the verse, so that it would be “and [he who] confirms it,” referring to Abū Bakr, or “and [those who] confirm it,” referring to Muslims in general (IK, R, Ṭ). But as al-Ṭabarī notes, such an addition is not warranted. Others read *whosoever comes with the truth and confirms it* as a reference to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (Qm).

With their Lord they shall have whatsoever they will—that is the recompense of the virtuous—

*Whatsoever they will* (cf. 16:31; 25:16; 42:22; 50:35) refers to the many bounties of Paradise that are said to be granted to the reverent (16:31) as a binding promise upon your Lord (25:16); see also 52:22; 56:21; 77:41–44.

that God may absolve them of the worst of that which they have done and render unto them their reward for the best of that which they used to do.

This is one of several verses to confirm that the believers are rewarded for the best of that which they used to do (9:121; 16:96–97; 24:38; 29:7; 46:16); see 29:7c.

Does God not suffice His servant? Yet they would
frighten thee with those apart from Him; and whomsoever God leads astray, no guide has he.

37 And whomsoever God guides, none shall lead him astray. Is not God Mighty, Possessor of Vengeance?

36–37 The initial question asks, “Did not God suffice Muhammad, as He sufficed the prophets before him?” The idolaters think that raising the specter of their idols’ displeasure and wrath will somehow influence the Prophet (T). His servant can also be understood to mean any believer, meaning that God suffices for anyone who worships only Him and relies solely upon Him (IK). In this sense, it follows upon the analogy of v. 29: in addition to not being divided between many masters and having a heart dispersed by many aspirations like the idolater, the believing monotheist has in God all that he or she needs. The one who does not believe and trust in God is allowed to go astray and has no way (4:88, 143; 42:46), no guide (7:186; 13:33; 39:23; 40:33), and no protector (17:97; 18:17; 42:44); and it is they who are the losers (7:178). In contrast, whomsoever God guides, he is rightly guided (7:178; 17:97; 18:17) and none can undo His Guidance, since God is Powerful over all things (2:20, 106, 148, 284; 3:29, 165). In this context, that God is Mighty, Possessor of Vengeance (cf. 3:5; 5:95; 14:47) indicates that, unlike the idols of whom the idolaters warn the Prophet, God will have vengeance upon those who deny Him.

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38 And wert thou to ask them, “Who created the heavens and the earth?” They would surely say, “God.” Say, “Then have you considered those upon whom you call, apart from God? If God desires some harm for me, could they remove His Harm, or if He desires some mercy, could they withhold His Mercy?” Say, “God suffices me; in Him trust those who trust.”

38 When questioned about the source of creation, they—that is, the idolaters among the Quraysh—would surely say, “God” (cf. 10:31; 23:84–89; 29:61, 63; 31:25; 43:9, 87), because the agency of a Creator above all others is evident to
them (Aj), given that many of them still believed in one supreme deity at the head of a pantheon. Their belief in a supreme deity is then used to argue that there is no way that any of their other deities could avert what God desires or has ordained, as in 10:107: *And if God should touch thee with affliction, none can remove it save He; and if He desires some good for thee, none can hold back His Bounty. He causes it to fall upon whomsoever He will among His servants* (cf. 3:160; 36:23; 48:11). *God suffices me* (cf. 3:173; 9:59, 129) means both that *God suffices as a Witness* (4:79, 167; 10:29; 17:96; 29:52; 48:29) between the Prophet and the disbelievers and that, since none can remove God’s harm, only *God suffices as a Guardian* (4:81, 132, 171; 33:3, 48).

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39 Say, “O my people! Act according to your position; I, too, am acting. Soon you shall know

40 upon whom there comes a punishment that disgraces him and upon whom there falls a punishment enduring.”

39–40 The injunction to act serves as a threat and a warning to the disbelievers (IK) meaning, “Perform the deeds prescribed by your religion, just as I will perform the deeds prescribed by my religion, and *soon you shall know whose religion is true*” and thus who will be punished with *a punishment that disgraces him* (cf. 11:39, 93) in this life and who will have *a punishment enduring* (cf. 5:37; 9:68; 11:39) in the Hereafter.

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41 Truly We have sent down unto thee the Book for mankind in truth. Whosoever is rightly guided, it is for the sake of his own soul. And whosoever goes astray only goes astray to the detriment thereof. And thou art not a guardian over them.

41 Regarding the Quran having been sent down *in truth* or *with truth* (cf. 2:176, 213; 3:3; 4:105; 5:48; 6:114; 39:2; 42:17), see 39:2c. Here *for mankind* is added to the phrase, indicating that it is out of God’s Mercy that such revelation
occurs, communicating truth and guidance to human beings. That one is guided for the sake of his own soul (which can also mean “for himself”) means that the benefit of guidance is for the human being alone; God has no need of it, but simply offers it as a mercy. In contrast, those who go astray harm only themselves, just as those who do wrong wrong only themselves; see commentary on the almost identical passages in 17:15 and 10:108. That the Prophet is not a guardian over them (cf. 6:107; 42:6; also 6:66; 10:108; 17:54; 25:43) also indicates that the Prophet should not torment himself (see 18:6; 26:3) or let his soul be expended in regrets (35:8) over the state and actions of the disbelievers (R). Elsewhere, the Prophet is told, Thou art only a warner, and God is Guardian over all things (11:12), and that he is not their keeper (4:80; 6:104; 11:86; 42:48), since in the end, only God suffices as a Guardian (4:81, 132, 171; 33:3, 48; see also 17:65).

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42 God takes souls at the moment of their death, and those who die not, during their sleep. He withholds those for whom He has decreed death, and sends forth the others till a term appointed. Truly in that are signs for a people who reflect.

42 God takes souls by sending the Angel of Death to them, as in 32:11: Say, “The Angel of death, who has been entrusted with you, will take you; then unto your Lord shall you be returned.” In death souls are completely detached from the body, and in sleep they are partially detached (R), as in 6:60: He it is Who takes your souls by night. Regarding the relationship between the two, a hadīth states, “Sleep is the brother of death, and the people of the Garden do not die” (Q); see also 6:60–61c and the essay, “Death, Dying, and the Afterlife.” Regarding the taking of the soul while human beings are sleeping, the Prophet advised his Companions to say when going to bed, “In Thy Name, my Lord, I lay down my body, and in Thee do I raise it. If Thou dost take my soul, have mercy upon it. And if Thou dost send it back, protect it with that with which Thou protectest Thy righteous servants” (IK, Q). A term appointed indicates the moment of death or the Day of Judgment, when all things are returned to God. For all human beings, as for all creation, this term is decreed, as in 6:2: He it is Who created you from clay, then decreed a term. A term is appointed with Him (see also 6:60; 10:49; 13:2; 42:14; 46:3). In this particular context, till a term appointed refers to the return of souls to their bodies when they awaken (R), thus granting them reprieve until they are taken in death and then called to account; see 35:45c.
Or do they take intercessors apart from God? Say, “Even though they have not any power and do not understand?”

Say, “Unto God belongs intercession altogether. To Him belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. Then unto Him shall you be returned.”

43–44 Even though it is only God Who takes souls, the idolaters still turn to their idols for intercession or as a means of bringing them nigh in nearness unto God (v. 3), because they do not understand (Q). Those upon whom they call apart from Him have no power of intercession, save such as have borne witness to the truth knowingly (43:86; cf. 19:87). Thus although unto God belongs intercession altogether, others, especially prophets, can be granted powers of intercession by His Leave, as in 20:109: On that Day intercession will be of no benefit, save [that of] those whom the Compassionate has granted leave and with whose word He is content (cf. 34:23; 53:26). Regarding the Quranic presentation of intercession, see 2:48c; 2:255c. Then unto Him shall you be returned is a common Quranic refrain, here referring to the Judgment before God (IK), when the disbelievers will be taken to account for their idolatry (Ṭ).

And when God is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter recoil. But when those apart from Him are mentioned, behold, they rejoice.

45 When God is mentioned without any acknowledgment of the deities and idols the idolaters worship, their hearts shudder and withdraw in disgust and disdain (Ṭ), as they are filled with distress and rancor (Z). But when their deities are acknowledged, they rejoice (Z). That they rejoice in idolatry and recoil from monotheism reveals the depth of their disbelief. According to some commentators, this verse refers to their reaction on the day when, in front of the Ka‘bah, the Prophet recited to them Sūrah 53, al-Najm, “The Star” (Ṭ, Z), which some contend had at one point contained a mistaken reference to their idols as “exalted cranes” (see 22:52c; 53:19–20c). This caused the idolaters to rejoice, thinking their
religion had found acceptance in the new revelation, until 53:23 was revealed and said of their deities, They are naught but names that you have named—you and your fathers—for which God has sent down no authority.

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46 Say, “O God! Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the Unseen and the seen, Thou judgest between Thy servants regarding that wherein they differ.”

46 Originator translates Fāṭir, a Divine Name related to the verb faṭara, meaning to “split” or “cleave.” In the Quran, Fāṭir always occurs in the phrase Originator of the heavens and the earth (cf. 6:14; 12:101; 14:10; 35:1; 42:11). Regarding God as Knower of the Unseen and the seen (cf. 6:73; 9:94, 105; 13:9; 23:92; 32:6; 59:22; 62:8; 64:18), see 59:22c. When the Prophet’s wife ʿĀʾishah was asked how he began his supererogatory prayers at night, she replied that he would say, “O God, Lord of Gabriel, Michael, and Seraphiel, Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the Unseen and the seen, Thou judgest between Thy servants regarding that wherein they differ. By Thy Leave, guide me with regard to that of the truth wherein there is dispute. Truly Thou guidest whomsoever Thou wilt unto a straight path” (IK, Q, R).

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47 Were those who work evil to possess all that is on the earth and the like of it besides, they would seek to ransom themselves with it from the terrible punishment on the Day of Resurrection. And there will appear unto them from God that which they had not reckoned.

47 The certainty of the reckoning after death is a central theme of the Quran, and it is considered futile to seek to ransom oneself with worldly goods from punishment in the Hereafter. Several verses are more emphatic, such as 3:91: An earth full of gold would not be accepted from any one of them, were he to offer it in ransom (see also 2:48, 123; 10:54; 13:18; 57:15). The overwhelming fright of the Day of Resurrection is said to be such that the guilty would wish to ransom himself from the punishment of that Day at the price of his children, his spouse
and his brother, his kin who had sheltered him, and all who are on the earth, that it might save him (70:11–14). That which they had not reckoned may refer to the evildoers’ denial that they would be taken to account for anything (Ṭ); to bad deeds that they had thought were in fact good deeds (Q), such as their worship of idols; to deeds from which they thought they would be able to repent before they died, though they were never able to do so; or to their failure to realize that they could not be forgiven without repentance (Q). It can thus be understood as a reference to everything of which a human being may be heedless in this life, as in 50:22, when every soul is addressed with the words, You were indeed heedless of this. Now We have removed from you your cover; so today your sight is piercing. In this vein, the present verse can also be seen as a warning. As the prominent Quran reciter Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir (d. 130/747–8) is reported to have said of this verse, “I fear that there will appear unto me from God that which I had not reckoned” (Aj. Q, Z).

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48 The evils of that which they have earned will appear unto them, and that which they used to mock will beset them.

48 The evil deeds committed in this life will be presented to the evildoers when they are given the books of their deeds (see 17:13–14c; 18:49c; 69:25; 78:29; 84:7–10) in their left hands (Ṭ); or what will appear are the effects of the evil deeds, that is, the types of retribution these deeds have earned them (R). And that which they used to mock will beset them (cf. 6:10; 11:8; 16:34; 21:41; 40:83; 45:33; 46:26) indicates that there is now no escape from their punishment (Ṭ), which will come upon them from every direction (R), and that what they will receive is a direct result of their own iniquity, since God does not wrong human beings in the least, but rather human beings wrong themselves (10:44).

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49 And when harm befalls man, he calls upon Us. Then, when We confer upon him a blessing from Us, he says, “I was only given it because of knowledge.” Nay, it is a trial, but most of them know not.
Cf. 10:12; 30:33; 39:8; see 39:8c. In this context, that people turn to God in a time of need and then turn away, waxing arrogant in a time of blessing, is another indication of utter corruption, since they have in effect acknowledged that none but God can protect them from what afflicts them, but then they ascribe their gains and achievements to their own striving. And this is a great contradiction (R). 

*I was only given it because of knowledge* means, “I was given these blessings because God knew that I deserved them” (IK, R), “because I have a special position” (IK, Q), “because I myself knew that I deserved them” (IK, R), “because my own knowledge earned this benefit for me” (Q, R), or “because of some knowledge that God has taught me” (Q). Such blessings are a trial from God because one must manifest gratitude upon receiving them and patience upon their disappearance (R).

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Those before them did say the same; yet that which they used to earn availed them not.

The same refers to the statement *I was only given it because of knowledge* in v. 49 (Q, R, Ṭ, Z), which is similar to what Korah, a wealthy member of Pharaoh’s court, says in 28:78, *I have only been given it on account of knowledge I possess*. But for those earlier people who made this statement, in this life and the Hereafter that which they used to earn availed them not (cf. 15:84; 40:82). That phrase can also be understood as a rhetorical question when the particle mā, here rendered as a negative particle, is understood as an interrogative particle; it would then read, “Then in what way did that which they used to earn avail them?” (Q). Both renderings indicate the frailty and ephemerality of the things that consume people in this life before there will appear unto them from God that which they had not reckoned (v. 47), on the Day when neither wealth nor children avail, save for him who comes to God with a sound heart (26:88–89).

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So the evils of that which they earned befell them. And as for those who do wrong among these, the evils of that which they have earned will befall them, and they cannot thwart [it].
The first part of this verse refers to \textit{those before them} (v. 50), while \textit{among these} refers to the disbelievers among the Quraysh and the contemporaries of the Prophet, who will be beset by the evil consequences of their disbelief and misdeeds, as were previous generations. They \textit{cannot thwart} God in this life or the next (R; see 35:44; 72:12) or thwart the punishment they have been promised, as in 6:134: \textit{Indeed, that which you are promised shall come to pass, and you cannot thwart it.}

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Do they not know that God outspreads and straitens provision for whomsoever He will? Truly in that are signs for a people who believe.

\textit{God outspreads . . . provision for whomsoever He will} as a test and \textit{straitens provision} for whomsoever He will as a trial (JJ); cf. 13:6; 17:30; 28:82; 29:62; 30:37; 34:39; 42:12. In this context, this phrase indicates that one does not receive blessings or suffer misfortune based on one’s intelligence or ignorance (R), as the disbelievers are said to think in v. 49, or because of one’s natural disposition or other outside forces (R), but rather because God provides and withholds provision as He wills. \textit{People who believe}, affirming the truth and consenting to it when it is made clear to them, know that the one who does this could only be God (Ṭ), and \textit{in that are signs for a people who believe} (cf. 6:99; 16:79; 27:86; 29:24; 30:37).

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Say, “O My servants who have been prodigal to the detriment of their own souls! Despair not of God’s Mercy. Truly God forgives all sins. Truly He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

This verse is similar to 4:110: \textit{Whosoever does evil or wrongs himself, and then seeks forgiveness of God, he will find God Forgiving, Merciful}. Many scholars consider this to be among the most hopeful verses of the Quran (others include 4:48, 116; 24:22; 33:47; 42:19, 22; 93:5) or among “the most joyous verses of the Quran” (Ṭ). Although this verse addresses all of humanity (Ṭ), many understand it to have initially addressed the situation of some Makkans who feared
that they could not repent and follow the Prophet because they had worshipped idols, called upon other deities, killed people whose lives God had declared inviolable (IK, Ṭ), or fornicated (IK). Their being prodigal to the detriment of their own souls would then refer to all manner of sin, even their having killed innocent people in the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance (jāhiliyyah; see 3:154; 5:50; 33:33; 48:26c; Ṭ); for the Quranic usage of “prodigal,” see 10:12c.

Others understand this verse to have been revealed in reference to a small group of Muslims whom the Makkans had prevented from migrating to Madinah with the Prophet and then forced, under the pain of persecution, to renounce Islam; for this they feared they could not repent (Ṭ). According to Thawbān, a freed slave of the Prophet, the Prophet said, “I would not wish to have the entire world and all that is in it [in exchange] for this verse: O My servants who have been prodigal to the detriment of their own souls! Despair not of God’s Mercy.” A man asked, “O Messenger of God, what about someone who associates partners with God?” The Prophet was silent and then said three times, “And why not one who associates partners with God?” (Ṭ). Such forgiveness would, however, be contingent upon the renouncement of idolatry and repentance for it, since 4:48 states, Truly God forgives not that any partner be ascribed unto Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whomsoever He will (cf. 4:116).

According to a third opinion, this verse was revealed to correct a group of Muslims who held that anyone who committed a major sin was among the people of the Fire (Ṭ). Regarding the manner in which God’s Forgiveness is intrinsic to the human experience, the Prophet said, “If you did not sin [and seek forgiveness], God would remove you and come with a people who would sin and seek forgiveness from God, and He would forgive them.”

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Turn unto your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you, whereupon you will not be helped.

54 Here turn unto your Lord indicates turning in repentance (Ṭ), responding to God, returning to obedience to God, and withdrawing from the acts of disobedience before one is punished for being a disbeliever (Ṭ). This verse thus provides the reason why one should despair not of God’s Mercy, as in 9:104: Know they not that God accepts repentance from His servants, and receives the charitable offerings, and that God is the Relenting, the Merciful? The combination of turning to God in repentance and submitting to Him can then evoke the opening injunction of this sūrah to worship God, devoting religion entirely to
Him (vv. 2, 11, 14), which can be seen as embracing the original or primordial human state of pure faith (Ṭ), as expressed in a prayer of Abraham, Truly I have turned my face toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth, as a ḥanīf, and I am not of the idolaters (6:79; Ṭ).

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55 And follow the most beautiful of that which has been sent down unto you from your Lord, before the punishment comes suddenly upon you while you are unaware,”

55 As in v. 18, what is most beautiful of what God has revealed is not understood to mean that one part is more beautiful than another (Q, Ṭ), but that one should act in accord with the revelation, thus maintaining obedience and avoiding disobedience (Q, R) or practicing what God has enjoined and avoiding what He has forbidden (Ṭ), since it is only when the injunctions contained in revelation have been put into practice that their purpose is achieved; see also 39:18c. Some understand this verse to mean that the Quran is the best or most beautiful of the books that God has sent down (IK, Q), as in v. 23, where it is referred to as the most beautiful discourse (R).

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56 lest any soul should say, “Alas for me, for what I neglected of my duty to God! Indeed, I was among the scoffers.”

56 Lest any soul should say, that is, lest anyone should seek to repent only when it is too late. Alas for me is understood as an expression of utmost regret and grief (R) for having failed to perform the deeds enjoined by God (Q, R,Ṭ). Of my duty to God renders min janbi’Llāh, which literally means “of” or “from the side of God” and is interpreted to mean, “of God’s Right” (Bḍ), “of obedience to God” (Q, Ṭs, Z), or “of the reward of God” (Q, Ṭs). In Arabic, “side” (janb) can allude to physical, emotional, and spiritual closeness, as when one speaks of being by another’s side in English. “Of the side of God” could then refer to being near to God and thus in Paradise, to being in the proximity of what leads to God (Q), or to seeking nearness to God (Ṭs). The scoffers are those who scoffed at the Quran and the Messenger (Q, Ṭ).
Or lest it say, “If only God had guided me, I would have been among the reverent.”

On the one hand, this lament is understood as correct (Q, R), since *God guides whomsoever He will unto a straight path* (2:213; 24:46; cf. 2:142; 10:25). But, on the other hand, people are responsible for not having followed God’s guidance, for God offered signs, but some chose not to look at or reflect upon them, turning away from the Quran and being preoccupied with the world and its vanities. Thus God responds, *Nay, My signs did indeed come unto you* (v. 59; Ṭṣ).

Or lest it say, when it sees the punishment, “If only I had another chance, I would be among the virtuous.”

While those represented in the previous verse blame God for their having not been guided, those represented in this verse acknowledge some culpability and ask to be given a second chance, as in 32:12, when the guilty say, *Send us back that we may work righteousness. Truly we are certain.* But as they have been given revelation in this world as well as a reprieve until the moment of death, such lamentations are not considered sincere and are of no avail, for *even if they were sent back, they would return to the very thing they had been forbidden. Truly they are liars* (6:28).

Nay, My signs did indeed come unto you; yet you denied them, waxed arrogant, and were among the disbelievers.

This is God’s response to the laments expressed in vv. 56–58, meaning that those voicing them had been informed of what would befall them through God’s signs, meaning revelation as well as the Divine signs in the created order, that is, *God’s signs upon the horizons and within themselves* (41:53), and thus have no excuse.
And on the Day of Resurrection thou wilt see those who lied against God having blackened faces. Is there not in Hell an abode for the arrogant?

For the phenomenon of faces being blackened or covered, see 3:106–7c, where those with whitened faces are contrasted to those with blackened faces; commentary on 80:38–42, which contrasts shining, radiant faces with those that are covered with dust, overspread with darkness; as well as 10:27, which speaks of the faces being covered with dark patches of night.

And God saves those who are reverent by their triumph; evil will not befall them; nor will they grieve.

Their triumph may refer to the virtues or deeds of the reverent (Ṭ), to their being delivered from the Fire (Ṭs), or to the triumph of spiritual concerns over worldly ones. Attaining to the Garden is referred to as the great triumph in over a dozen verses; for the blessings of the Garden, see 5:119; 44:51–57. The torments of Hell will not befall them; nor will they grieve regarding the things of this world, which have now passed (Ṭ). Alternately, that they are not touched by evil or grief refers to their being spared any punishment on the Day of Resurrection (IK).

God is the Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over all things.

Elsewhere the Prophet is told, Thou art only a warner; and God is Guardian over all things (11:12); see 39:41c.

Unto Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who disbelieve in the signs of God, it is they
who are the losers.

63 That God holds the keys of the heavens and the earth (cf. 42:12) indicates that He has sovereignty over them and protects them (Z). It is understood to mean “the keys to the treasuries” (Ṭ) and thus to be an indirect reference to the treasuries themselves (R, Z), an allusion to 15:21, Naught is there, but that its treasuries lie with Us, and We do not send it down, save in a known measure (cf. 63:7), meaning that God opens the treasuries of provision and mercy unto whomsoever He wills and closes them as He alone desires (Z), dispersing provisions and mercy (Ṭs). It may also refer to God’s Knowledge, as in 6:59: And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. None knows them but He. On a spiritual level, it can be understood to mean that God possesses the keys to all hearts (ST); see 6:59c. Having denied God’s signs, the disbelievers lose any share of the good that God measures out from His treasuries, in this life and the next (Ṭ).

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64 Say, “Do you bid me to worship other than God, O ignorant ones?”

64 This rhetorical question serves as an expression of amazement that the disbelievers could ask the Prophet to worship those who have none of the keys to the treasuries alongside the One Who has them all, as in 38:9, which asks about their deities, or have they the treasuries of thy Lord’s Mercy, the Mighty, the Bestower? (cf. 52:32).

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65 Surely it has been revealed unto thee and unto those before thee that if thou dost ascribe partners [unto God], thy work will surely come to naught and thou shalt be among the losers.

65 This verse repeats the Quranic assertion that, in the absence of correct and proper belief, good deeds come to naught, providing no reward in the next life, because, as the Prophet is reported to have said, “Deeds are only in accord with their intentions, and every person has only what he intended.” See also 2:217; 3:22; 5:5, 53; 6:88; 7:147; 9:17; 11:16; 18:105; 33:19; 47:9, 28, 32.
Rather, worship God and be among the thankful!

One should be thankful to God for His Guidance in worshipping Him alone and repudiating the worship of idols (Ṭ) and, in the context of the preceding verses, for what He has measured out for human beings from His treasuries.

They did not measure God with His true measure. The whole earth shall be but a handful to Him on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be enfolded in His right Hand. Glory be to Him, exalted is He above the partners they ascribe.

The idolaters did not honor God as He should be honored (Q,Ṭ) when they assigned partners to Him, described Him by attributes that do not pertain to Him (Bḍ), and did not believe that God has complete power over all things (IK,Ṭ). Almost all commentators relate this verse to the idolaters of Makkah, but those who provide multiple opinions also relate it to an instance when a Jew, some say a rabbi, said to the Prophet, “O Muhammad! God will put the heavens on a finger, the earths on another finger, the mountains on a finger, and the rest of creation on another finger. Then He will say, ‘I am the King.’” At this the Prophet smiled broadly until his molars could be seen and recited this verse (IK, Q,Ṭ), some say in confirmation of what had been said (IK,Ṭ), indicating that the Prophet recognized that the Muslims and the Jews were both monotheists, the opposite of the idolaters. Less reliable accounts say that this verse was actually revealed as a rebuke to the position expressed by the Jew (Ṭ); for they did not measure God with His true measure, see also 6:91c; 22:74c. That the whole earth shall be but a handful to Him indicates the ease with which God can bring creation to an end (Bḍ). Glory be to Him, exalted is He above the partners they ascribe (cf. 10:18; 16:1; 30:40) is an affirmation of God’s utter transcendence.

And the trumpet will be blown, whereupon whosoever is
in the heavens and on the earth will swoon, save those whom God wills. Then it will be blown again, and, behold, they will be standing, beholding.

68 This verse stands apart from others that mention the blowing of the trumpet heralding the apocalypse and the onset of the Final Judgment (see 6:73; 18:99; 20:102; 23:101; 27:87; 36:51; 50:20; 69:13; 74:8; 78:18) in that it speaks of the trumpet being blown twice by the Archangel Seraphiel. The first blow, blast, or call (as it is named in other contexts) results in the destruction of all creation, and the second heralds the Resurrection. Those who are exempted from swooning at the first trumpet blast are said to be the archangels Gabriel, Michael, and Seraphiel and the Angel of Death, ʿIzrāʾīl (or Azrael; Ṭ, Ṭs). Others say that eventually everything swoons; then God resurrects Seraphiel to blow the trumpet another time, summoning the Resurrection (IK); this second blast is what is referred to in 79:13–14: Yet it shall be but a single cry, then, behold, they will be upon a wide expanse (cf. 30:25). The Prophet is reported to have said that the period between the two blasts will be forty, though he did not specify if he meant hours, days, months, or years. The Prophet continued, “Then God will send down a rain from the sky, and the dead body will sprout just as a green plant sprouts. Every part of the person will deteriorate except for one bone, and it is the coccyx bone. From it creation will be assembled on the Day of Judgment” (IK).

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69 The earth will shine with the Light of its Lord, the Book will be set down, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forth. Judgment will be made between them in truth, and they shall not be wronged.

70 Every soul will be paid in full for that which it has done, and He knows best what they do.

69–70 The earth will shine on the barren plain upon which all human beings will be gathered for the Resurrection, but it will not be as the earth we know, since on that Day the earth shall be changed into other than the earth (14:48). Rather, God will leave it a barren plain. You will see no crookedness or curvature therein (20:106–7). Human beings, and some say all creatures, will come from
their graves to this plain in throngs (78:18). They will gather, according to a ḥadīth, “barefoot, naked, and uncircumcised, engulfed by their sweat, which will reach to their very nostrils.” They will not, however, look upon one another, since for every man that Day his affair shall suffice him (80:37). Each person will then be presented the book of his or her deeds, which leaves out nothing, small or great (18:49); see 17:71c; 69:19–29c.

The prophets and the witnesses from among the angels who recorded their deeds in their books (IK, Ṭs; see 43:80c; 50:17–18c; 82:10–11) will then be brought forth to bear witness for or against human beings. Others understand the witnesses as a reference to those who bear witness that the prophets delivered the revelations and that the people denied them (Ṭs) or as a reference to those who were martyred in the path of God (Ṭs). It could also be understood as a reference to everything that will bear witness for them or against them (Ṭs), from the angels to their own limbs, regarding the latter of which 41:20 states, Their ears, their eyes, and their skins will bear witness against them for that which they used to do. When all of their deeds are laid bare, the deeds will be weighed against one another, as in 21:47: We shall set the just scales for the Day of Resurrection, and no soul shall be wronged in aught. Even if it be the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it. Thus they shall not be wronged (cf. 2:281; 6:160; 10:47, 54; 16:111; 21:47; 36:54c; 45:22; 46:19). Then every soul will be paid in full for what good or evil it has done (cf. 16:111) or what it has earned (2:281; 3:25).

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71 And those who disbelieve will be driven unto Hell in throngs, till when they reach it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say unto them, “Did not messengers from among you come to you, reciting unto you the signs of your Lord and warning you of the meeting with this your Day?” They will say, “Yea, indeed!” But the Word of punishment has come due for the disbelievers.

72 It will be said, “Enter the gates of Hell, to abide therein.” How evil is the abode of the arrogant!

71–72 Those whose scales are heavy with good deeds will then be separated from those whose scales are light (see 23:102–3; 101:6–9c), and the latter are
driven and thrust into the Fire of Hell with [violent] thrusting (52:13). After the gates of Hell are opened (cf. 16:29), its keepers, who are said to be nineteen angels (see 74:30c), will ask the disbelievers this rhetorical question by way of rebuke (cf. 40:50; 67:8–9). The disbelievers will answer in the affirmative, saying, Indeed, a warner came unto us, but we denied him and said, “God did not send anything down; you are in naught but great error.” . . . Had we listened or had we understood, we would not be among the inhabitants of the Blaze (67:9–10). But their now belated affirmation can do nothing to forestall their impending punishment, because they were indeed “warned” and given ample opportunity to repent, thus the Word of punishment has come due (cf. 10:33; 22:18; 36:7; 40:6). Having been made to realize and admit their error, the disbelievers are then cast into Hell.

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73 And those who reverence their Lord will be driven to the Garden in throngs, till when they reach it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say unto them, “Peace be upon you; you have done well; so enter it, to abide [therein].”

73 In contrast to the disbelievers, the reverent believers, whose scales are heavy, will enter the gates of the Garden, of which, according to several ḥādīth, there are eight (IK, Q, Ṭs). The throngs are understood as a reference to one throng coming after another, starting with the best, then the next best, and then the next (IK). In this regard, the Prophet is reported to have said, “I will be the first to enter Paradise” (IK). Among the throngs, the first to enter is said to be a group “appearing like the moon on the night when it is full, and they will be followed by a group that looks like the brightest star shining in the sky” (IK). In other ḥādīth, this group is reported to number seventy thousand or seven hundred thousand (IK). Elsewhere it is said that angels shall enter upon them from every gate. “Peace be upon you because you were patient.” How excellent is the Ultimate Abode! (13:23–24). Regarding the gates of the Garden, see 13:23–24c; 38:50c. This is one of several verses that speak of the greeting of Peace or Peace be upon you that awaits believers in the Hereafter (see also 7:46; 10:10; 13:23–24; 14:23; 16:32; 19:62; 25:75; 33:44; 36:58c; 56:25–26).

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74 They will say, “Praise be to God, Who was faithful to us
in His Promise, and has caused us to inherit the land, that we may settle in the Garden wheresoever we will.” How excellent is the reward of the workers!

74 These are the words of the inhabitants of the Garden in response to the greetings from the angels. His Promise refers to that given to all human beings in 10:4, whether they are destined for Heaven or for Hell: Unto Him is your return all together; God’s Promise is true, a promise at which the disbelievers scoff in several verses, saying, When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful? (10:48; 21:38; 27:71; 34:29; 36:48; 67:25). In this case, His Promise also refers more specifically to the various promises given to the believers, as in v. 20 as well as 31:8–9: Truly those who believe and perform righteous deeds, theirs shall be Gardens of bliss, therein to abide—God’s Promise in truth (cf. 4:122). The righteous are also said to “inherit” Paradise in 7:43 and 23:10–11 and to inherit the earth in 21:105, which can be understood to mean that they may do with it as they please and, in their own words, settle wheresoever we will.

For more on the events pertaining to the end of time described in vv. 68–74, see the essay “Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran.”

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75 And thou shalt see the angels encircling all around the Throne, hymning the praise of their Lord. Judgment shall be made between them in truth, and it will be said, “Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.”

75 While the angels encircling all around the Throne of God hymn His praise, those who bear the Throne and those who dwell nigh unto it (40:7), the latter of whom may be the same as those mentioned here, supplicate God saying, Our Lord, Thou dost encompass all things in Mercy and Knowledge. Forgive those who repent and follow Thy way, and shield them from the punishment of Hellfire. Our Lord, make them enter Gardens of Eden that Thou hast promised them and those among their fathers, their spouses, and their progeny who were righteous. Truly Thou art the Mighty, the Wise (40:7–8).

This final Praise be to God is uttered by the angels or by God Himself (IK). Some commentators note the significance of the fact that this account of the end of creation finishes with Praise be to God and another account of the beginning of creation starts in the same way (Praise be to God, Who created the heavens and
the earth, and made darkness and light, 6:1; IK, Q, Ts); they take this to imply that creation begins and ends with God’s praise.